

Message Text

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PAGE 01 DUBLIN 00673 231040 Z

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TO SECSTATE WASHDC 4690

INFO AMEMBASSY LONDON

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TAGS: PINS, PBOR, EI

SUBJ: CLAUDIA SMUGGLERS SENTENCED

REF: DUBLIN 0416

SUMMARY: JOE CAHILL AND OTHER IRISHMEN INVOLVED IN CLAUDIA SMUGGLING EPISODE SENTENCED. PUBLIC SEEMS CONTINUE IN FAVOR OF ANTI- IRA MEASURES. DETAILS OF CLAUDIA INTERCEPTION NOT YET DISCLOSED, BUT GOOD INTELLIGENCE PROBABLY THE KEY. END SUMMARY.

1. ON MAY 21, DUBLIN' S CRIMINAL COURT GAVE THREE- YEAR SENTENCE TO JOE CAHILL, WHO WAS APPARENTLY LEADER OF SIX- MAN PROVO DELEGATION THAT MET ARMS- SMUGGLING VESSEL CALUDIA ON MARCH 28 (REFTEL). OF OTHER FIVE CONSPIRATORS, TWO WERE SENTENCED TO TWO YEARS, TWO OTHERS WERE SENTENCED TO TWO YEARS BUT ARE EXPECTED TO HAVE SENTENCES SUSPENDED, AND ONE WAS ACQUITTED. EXCEPT FOR CAHILL, WHO IS WELL KNOWN AS SENIOR PROVO (ORIGINALLY OF BELFAST), OTHER FIVE MEN WERE RESIDENTS OF AREA NEAR CALUDIA LANDING AND ARE NOT KNOWN NATIONALLY. THREE WHOSE SENTENCES ARE BEING CARRIED OUT
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PAGE 02 DUBLIN 00673 231040 Z

WERE ALSO BEING CONVICTED OF BEING MEMBERS OF IRA.

2. CAHILL ACCEPTED RESPONSIBILITY OF ARMS SMUGGLING ATTEMPT AND, AT END OF TRAIL, MADE STATEMENT BEGINNING: " IF I AM GUILTY OF ANY CRIME, IT IS THAT ID DID NOT SUCCEED IN GETTING THE CONTENTS OF THE CLAUDIA INTO THE HANDS OF THE FREEDOM FIGHTERS IN THIS COUNTRY." HE ACCUSED THOSE WHO ARRESTED HIM OF " NATIONAL TREACHERY" AND CONSPIRACY WITH " BRITISH ENEMIES."

3. COMMENT: IT IS DIFFICULT TO GENERALIZE ON PUBLIC ATTITUDES TOWARDS EVENTS OF THIS KIND. MOST HERE SEEM HAPPY TO HAVE ARMS SMUGGLERS CAUGHT AND SENTENCED, BUT PROBABLY MANY OF SAME PEOPLE HAVE VESTIGIAL ADMIRATION FOR MEN LIKE CHAILL, WHO ARE DESCENDANTS OF ANCIENT TRADITIONS. ANY AMBIVALENCE IN PUBLIC OPINION, HOWEVER, NO LONGER SEEMS TO BE HANDICAPPING GOVT, COURTS, OR SECURITY FORCES IN FIRMEST POSSIBLE ACTION AGAINST PROVOS. AS FAR AS WE CAN TELL, MOST IRISH CITIZENS ARE GENUINELY HORRIFIED AT NORTHERN VIOLENCE AND GLAD TO SEE STRONG NEW MEASURES AGAINST IT. WE EXPECT THIS SITUATION TO CONTINUE INDEFINITELY, ASSUMING THAT BRITISH POLICY CONTINUES MEET APPROVAL OF IRISH BODY POLITIC.

4. WE ARE NOT CONVINCED, HOWEVER, THAT STRINGENT MEASURES IN FORCE HERE WILL HAVE ANY OVERWHELMING IMPACT ON MILITARY SITUATION IN NORTH. IN FIRST PLACE, IT SEEMS IMPOSSIBLE TO PREVENT ALL SMUGGLING OR TO DEAL OFF BORDER BETWEEN NI AND REPUBLIC. IN SECOND PLACE, AND MORE IMPORTANT, MAIN REASON FOR SUCCESS OF NORTHERN INSURGENCY HAS BEEN SUPPORT OF LOCAL COMMUNITY. ANY NORTHERN PROTESTANTS HAVE ATTACHED GREAT WEIGHT TO IRA SUPPORT IN SOUTH, BUT THIS HAS PROBABLY ALWAYS BEEN OF MORE PSYCHOLOGICAL THAN PRACTICAL SIGNIFICANCE.

5. FULL DETAILS OF CLAUDIA INCIDENT HAVE NOT BECOME PUBLIC AND MAY NOT BE KNOWN FOR LONG TIME. IT IS WIDELY ACCEPTED HERE, ON BASIS OF CREDIBLE PRESS REPORTS, THAT ARMS ORIGINATED IN LIBYA. GOI MUST HAVE HAD TIP- OFF LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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PAGE 03 DUBLIN 00673 231040 Z

BUT HAS NOT DISCLOSED SOURCE, THOUGH QUICK RELEASE OF CLAUDIA'S CAPTAIN AND CRE MAY FURNISH CLUE. WE ASSUME THAT GOOD INTELLIGENCE WILL CONTINUE TO BE MOST IMPORTANT FACTOR IN DEFEATING THIS KIND OF INTERNATIONAL TERRORISM. MOORE

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